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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CRISIS, URBAN SEGREGATION AND SOCIAL INNOVATION IN CATALONIA

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ABSTRACT: This paper questions the contribution of social innovation to the capacity of disadvantaged communities to resist the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and its social repercussions. It does so on the basis of a study on the dynamics of urban segregation and social innovation in the context of the crisis in Catalonia (Spain). The study adopts a multi-method approach that combines statistical analysis of urban segregation dynamics in the 2001-2012 period; the mapping of social innovation practices across the region; and a cross-case comparison of six case studies. The paper highlights the structural and metropolitan character of urban segregation in the region, which has been significantly aggravated both by the crisis and the residential transformation that occurred during the years of the housing bubble. It also shows that social innovation practices are distributed very unevenly in spatial terms, being concentrated in middle-income areas with a tradition of social mobilisation. In summary, the paper states the limits of social innovation as a driver for socio-spatial cohesion in cities and stresses the need for stronger (redistributive) public policies.

KEYWORDS: crisis, neighbourhoods, social inequalities, social innovation, urban segregation

1. Introduction

The burst of the housing bubble in 2008 signalled the beginning of a long and profound economic crisis with dramatic social consequences in Spain. The unemployment rate reached 26% by March 2013. Three and a half million jobs have been lost since the beginning of the crisis. In 2012, more than a half of those unemployed had been in that situation for more than one year (which in most cases meant that they were no longer entitled to unemployment subsidies). The percentage of households with all members unemployed is now over 10% of all Spanish households – close to 2 million households at the end of 2012. The impact of the crisis is very unevenly distributed among socio-economic groups. In terms of per capita income distribution, the difference between the top percentile (80) and the bottom percentile (20) has increased by almost 30% since the beginning of the crisis (Cáritas, 2013). Together with the young, migrants have been especially affected by the crisis. After a period of massive immigration (close to 5 million people in less than a decade) unemployment among workers of foreign non-EU origin is now close to 50%. Several studies have presented evidence for this pattern of social dynamics and the subsequent increase in different modalities of poverty and social exclusion¹. However, the spatial dimension of such social trends remains unexplored. This paper addresses this gap in the literature, presenting the results of a study called “Barris i Crisi” (Neighbourhoods and the Crisis) on the dynamics of urban segregation and social

¹ For an overview of the impact of the crisis and austerity on people at an European level see, for example, the report of Caritas Europa (2015)

innovation in the region of Catalonia². The study shows a significant intensification of urban segregation in Catalonia over the last decade, not only as a consequence of the crisis but also as a result of the deep residential transformations that took place in the years of the housing bubble. Against this background, the paper questions to what extent (and under what circumstances) citizens' initiatives can make a significant contribution to counteract the current dynamics of urban socio-spatial polarisation by strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable communities to resist and adapt to the effects of the crisis. Through an analysis of a map of social innovation practices in Catalonia, created as part of the "Barris i Crisi" project – which includes more than 700 cases – and a cross-case comparison of six case studies, the paper calls into question the centrality of social innovation as a driver for socio-spatial cohesion. The results of the statistical analysis show that urban segregation is a structural phenomenon with a metropolitan scale. When overlapping the maps of social innovation and urban segregation we observe that social innovation does not tend to concentrate in the most vulnerable areas but in middle-income areas with a tradition of social mobilisation. Moreover, variations in the effects of the crisis in the six areas analysed are mainly explained by the capacity of community actors – governmental and non-governmental – to provide joint responses to the challenges of communities. The paper highlights the importance of public policies in dealing with the phenomenon of urban segregation and community decay, warning against the risks of transferring the responsibility of (urban) social cohesion to social innovation.

In the first section of the paper, we put forward the theoretical problem addressed by this article, focusing on the importance of social innovation in disadvantaged urban areas. In the second section, we identify the goals of the "Barris i Crisi" project and the different methods that we have used to fulfil them. In the third and fourth sections, we present the results of this research, emphasising those elements that speak directly to the theoretical issues addressed in this paper. Finally, we close the paper by reflecting on the theoretical and policy implications of our study.

2. Social innovation as a response to urban social exclusion and segregation

² The full title of the study is "Disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the face of the crisis: urban segregation, social innovation and civic capacity". This research is coordinated by Dr. Ismael Blanco (Principal Investigator), Dr. Oriol Nel·lo, Dr. Quim Brugué and Dr. Eduard Jiménez. It has received the support of the Recercaixa Programme. For more information (mostly in Catalan) see: <http://barrisicrisi.wordpress.com>

The concept of social innovation has gained prominence in European academic and political debates in recent years. In an increasingly complex and dynamic world (Beck, 1998; Kooiman, 2003), ‘innovation’ seems to have become an imperative for any kind of organisation. Through concepts such as the reinvention of government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1994), the New Public Management (Hood, 1991) and public sector innovation (Borins, 2014), the literature has stressed the need for developing innovative ways of producing, managing and delivering public services to an increasingly sophisticated and diversified society. Management theory also states the need for firms to be innovative to survive in a more open and competitive economy (Drucker, 1994). In the same vein, social organisations and citizens are expected to explore and put into practice innovative ways of satisfying social needs.

It is in this latter sense that the literature highlights the significance of ‘social innovation’, understood as those socially-led initiatives that try to satisfy social needs that are not adequately covered either by the state or by the market. According to the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), “social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means”. Specifically, social innovations are “new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society’s capacity to act” (BEPA, 2011:7; see also Murray et al, 2010).

Social innovation has become a fashionable concept, partly as a consequence of the dissemination task undertaken by the European Commission (see, for example, BEPA, 2011; and 2014). The BEPA justifies the current interest in the concept of social innovation on four main grounds: the growth of social demands and societal challenges as a consequence of phenomena like migration, unemployment, poverty, ageing and climate change; the existence of major budgetary constraints as a result of the crisis and of austerity politics; the inadequacy of the traditional solutions that come from conventional practices of the market, the public sector and civil society; and the emergence of new opportunities linked to developments in information technology and rapid growth of the non-profit sector and social economy.

As often happens with new and innovative concepts, different strands of the literature tend to use the ‘social innovation’ notion in significantly different ways. Some authors, for example, put the emphasis on products such as ‘Apps’ and other technological innovations that foster the exchange of information, goods and services both between different groups of citizens and between citizens and public administrations. Such technological innovations can be devised by private enterprises (or ‘social entrepreneurs’) that aim at generating new business opportunities, although the concept of social innovation emphasises the added value that these new products

can generate for society as a whole. This could be defined as a managerial and technical perspective that understands social innovation as a product rather than as a process. Some of these approaches to social innovation (Mulgan, 2006; Leadbeater, 1997) are related to previous analysis about the effect of technological innovations in household economies or in social organization (Gershuny, 1983) and with the classical centrality of entrepreneurs in innovation literature (Schumpeter, 1934).

In this paper we focus our attention on an alternative perspective, which corresponds to what Oosterlynck et al (2013: 2) have called the ‘grassroots strand of social innovation’. This approach defines social innovation as ‘locally embedded practices (...) that help socially excluded and impoverished individuals and social groups to satisfy basic needs for which they find no adequate solutions in the private market or macro-level welfare policies’ (ibid, 2). The grassroots strand of social innovation focuses its attention on the participative processes through which disadvantaged communities can satisfy their collective needs. In its mainstream – neoliberal – version, the grassroots approach connects with neoliberal discourses – such as those based on the notions of the ‘participative society’ and the ‘Big Society’ – that underline the importance of local self-help as a way to substitute for retrenching social rights (Martinelli, 2013). An alternative, more radical approach highlights the potential of social innovation processes in terms of political empowerment of the poor and of transformation of power relations.

The SINGOCOM project³, has contributed decisively to the theorization of the grassroots strand of social innovation – in its more radical version (see Moulaert et al, 2010). In their definition, “social innovation occurs when the mobilisation of social and institutional forces succeeds in bringing about the satisfaction of previously alienated human needs, the relative empowerment of previously silent or excluded social groups through the creation of new ‘capabilities’, and, ultimately, changes in the existing social – and power – relations towards a more inclusive and democratic governance system” (González et al, 2010: 54). This definition points to a set of aspects that allow us to delimit the basic characteristics of the ‘grassroots approach’.

First, in their definition, the main purpose of social innovation is the satisfaction of “alienated human needs”, that is to say, needs which are not satisfied as a consequence of the dynamics of social exclusion. Social exclusion “may refer to

³ The full title of the project is “Social Innovation, Governance and Community Building”. It is a research coordinated by Frank Moulaert, and financed by the European Commission within the Fifth Framework Programme.

material needs (poverty, lack of housing) but also social (limited access to education and health), political (no citizenship, no access to decision-making) and existential (no access to self-expression and creative capacities) deprivation” (Gonzalez et al, 2010: 54).

Second, social innovation is not only about a set of products or services for covering specific human needs, but also a process that entails the empowerment of previously silent or excluded social groups. It is in the frame of this process where previously demobilised and silent social groups are expected to gain consciousness of the social nature of their needs and rights, and to collectively articulate their demands on the grounds of new organisational capabilities. Social innovative practices, according to Moulaert and Nussbaumer (2005), are driven by processes of social learning, awareness raising and collective action and mobilisation (see also Blanco and León, 2016).

Third, social innovation entails the transformation of power relations, something that may occur “between social groups, among scales of government, and among civil society, the state and the market sectors” (González et al, 2010: 55). Social innovation is expected to compensate pre-existing power inequalities in favour of the weakest social groups, the most deprived urban areas and social and community organisations. Social innovation aims to contribute to social inclusion and to the democratization of governance.

To sum up, the ‘grassroots approach’ focuses its attention on ‘localized forms of social innovation aimed at overcoming poverty and social exclusion’ (Oosterlynck et al, 2013:2). It sees social innovation as a process of transformation of social relations among socially vulnerable or excluded groups and the rest of society, which entails a transformation of power relations in favour of the former. In line with a vast strand of the literature underscoring the spatial dimension of poverty and social exclusion (see, for example, Musterd et al, 2006, and Soja, 2010), the ‘grassroots approach’ sees neighbourhoods ‘as pivotal sites for initiating and implementing social change that may ripple through the city (or...) sites from which emancipatory initiatives emerge. “The main argument (...) is that locally based initiatives, often much more so than official state-led programmes, can galvanise a range of publics in activities that have city-wide (if not greater) impacts on the dynamics of urban cohesion and social development” (Moulaert, 2010: 5).

The relationship between social innovation and the state can be ambiguous and contradictory. On the one hand, according to Swyngedouw and Moulaert, practices of self-governing and self-management challenge institutionalised power: “to the extent that local initiatives are self organised and self-managed and express the capacity of each and every one to be and act politically, they are living proof of the deficient state,

of the fact that the social and the political can function without the state or at least without some of the state functions” (2010: 222). However, empirical analysis often shows that “the tense relationship between state and the social innovation initiatives (...) has in many cases gone through a stage of co-operative function” (Swyngedouw and Moulaert, 2010: 222).

This paper aims to shed light on the relationship between socio-spatial segregation and social innovation. A review of the literature allows us to establish two competing hypotheses on this matter. The first one contends that social innovation is more likely to emerge in the margins of the mainstream society, and more concretely at the urban (and social) peripheries, where market and state failure is more evident and the consequences of such ‘failure’ are more dramatic. The SINGOCOM project points to this direction, stating “it is the very spatial concentration of exclusion factors and people reacting to them that works as a catalyst for seeking alternatives” (Moulaert, 2010: 11). The second hypothesis suggests that despite having more pressing social needs, these areas tend to lack very important resources for collective action, such as time, social trust, money and education (Verba et al, 1995; Putnam, 2000). Moulaert himself acknowledges that elements such as the “long histories of ‘disintegration’, marked by the absence of enabling economic circuits, fragmentation of social capital, breakdowns of traditional and often beneficial professional relations, loss of quality of collective action and policy delivery systems”, among others, may undermine the potential of socio-spatial exclusion “as breeding grounds for social innovation” (Moulaert, 2010: 11). Accordingly, we could expect that social innovation would not emerge in the areas where it was most needed, but among those communities that concentrate more capacities for collective action. Previous experience in collective action, the capacity to access to governance and policy structures and resources, and the links with broader social movements may facilitate social innovation in middle-class and progressive urban environments to a greater extent than in the most deprived urban areas. The will to find alternative ways of living, consuming, producing and exchanging, motivated by ideological or ethical reasons might be a much stronger driver for social innovation than processes of socio-spatial deprivation and differentiation.

3. Neighbourhoods and the crisis: goals and methods

The ‘Barris i Crisi’ project allows us explore the dynamics of social innovation as a response to the urban socio-spatial consequences of the economic and financial crisis

in Catalonia (Spain). More concretely, this study follows three main goals. First, to analyse the dynamics of urban segregation in Catalonia in the context of the crisis, thus exploring how the social and the spatial dimensions of the crisis interact at the urban level. Second, to identify those factors that contribute to the capacity of disadvantaged urban areas to cope with the effects of the crisis and the contribution of social innovation practices to the resilience of communities in this context. Third, to make proposals that stimulate the debate on strategies that both public administrations and social and community organisations can develop to cope with the socio-spatial consequences of the crisis.

To fulfil these goals, we have used three main research methods. First, the statistical analysis of a set of indicators strongly related to the spatial distribution of income: the first two relate to the socioeconomic condition of the population -% of unemployment, % of foreign population - and the other two to urban conditions - rateable value and average size of dwellings. The analysis of each of these four variables is conducted for more than 5.000 census tracts of Catalonia during the period 2001-2012⁴.

Second, we have undertaken a mapping of social innovation in Catalonia including more than 700 practices. In order to elaborate this map, we have used three basic sources of information:

- 1) Previously existing maps of specific modalities of social innovation. We have collected sorted and systematized georeferential data of previous maps like 'time banks and social currency in Spain' or the 'Map of the Barcelona community gardens'.
- 2) Online data. We have collected data provided by some social platforms whose activity has special significance in Catalonia – i.e. 'The Platform of Citizens Affected by Mortgages' (PAH), the renewable energy cooperative 'Som Energia' (We are Energy), the cooperative of financial services 'Coop 57', and Guifi.net, a citizen based, free, open and neutral network infrastructure, mostly composed by wireless telecommunications community networks. We have decided to locate on the map the territorial nodes of this platforms and not the result of their everyday action. In other words, what we think best expresses the process (and not the product) of social innovation over the territory is not, for example, where the action of stopping a housing eviction takes place, but the physical spaces where the PAH is organized in every neighbourhood.

⁴ Census tracts are basic statistical units the size of which can range from 1.000 to 2.500 inhabitants. In denser, urban areas, their size is often lower than that of neighbourhoods – i.e. neighbourhoods may encompass two or more different census tracts. In less dense, rural areas, census tracts can encompass one single municipality.

3) A collaborative online form. We have designed an online form through which anyone can add cases to map –after validation of the research group. One hundred out of the 700 social innovation practices have been added to the map thanks to the collaboration of internet users.

All the data extracted from these three sources of information has been stored in an online database with a visualization available through open software cartography (mapbox). We have used cloud mapping tools that allow observations of the spatial density of each of these categories as well as more specific information of each practice (using the zoom of the map).

We have grouped all these data in four main categories: *citizen solidarity* initiatives (like time banks and the local assemblies of the anti-housing eviction); practices related to *territory, environment and energy* (like community gardens and renewable energy cooperatives); *economy and alternative consumption* initiatives (like ethical banking and consumer cooperatives); and *self-organised spaces* that foster civic and autonomous management of spaces like urban abandoned slots, buildings and facilities⁵.

The third research method is a cross-case comparison of six urban areas located at the outskirts of different metropolitan cities of Catalonia: Ciutat Meridiana (Barcelona) (10.874 inhabitants in according to the Population Census of 2011); Bellvitge (L'Hospitalet) (25.187 inhabitants); El Palau-Rocafonda (Mataró) (12.169 inhabitants); Pardinyes (Lleida) (12.912 inhabitants); Santa Eugènia (8.800 inhabitants) and Salt (30.389 inhabitants)⁶ (Girona). Our case studies correspond to peripheral urban areas that can be labelled as 'disadvantaged areas' because of their historical trajectories and their socio-spatial characteristics. They are all areas built in the 1960s and 70s to house the immigrants that were arriving to Catalonia from other Spanish regions to find job opportunities in an expanding industrial sector. Since then, they have been noted for a concentration of residents with relatively low-income levels, low-levels of educational attainment and high rates of unemployment. However, they have different degrees of

⁵ We focus on such categories and practices because they can be considered as 'typical' examples of social innovation mentioned in the literature. They all represent horizontal and cooperative citizen practices that try to satisfy social needs such as housing, food, energy and space autonomously from the market and from the state. At the same time, they are spaces of political resistance, from which the citizens do not only put into practice alternative ways of living and of interacting, but also formulate (more or less explicitly) socio-political alternatives to the status quo. Finally, through these actions, citizens (and the social movements in which they are involved) challenge dominant institutions and practices, aiming at transforming the power relations upon which they rest.

⁶ Salt is a municipality and not a neighbourhood. However, its urban function inside of the metropolitan area of Girona is similar to the previously mentioned urban areas.

community organization and have followed different patterns of relations between communities and local public administrations. This latter aspect allows us to compare the significance of traditions of social mobilisation and collaboration with public institutions in the context of the current crisis. Through such case studies, we have analysed in-depth the particularities of the effects of the crisis in each area, the responses given (jointly or separately) by local administration and community organisations (neighbourhood, social and cultural associations), and the importance of “civic capacity” (Stone 2005, De Souza Briggs, 2008) in coping with the consequences of the crisis in each neighbourhood.

The methodology was based on the triangulation of different data collection techniques: first, the analysis of different socio-economic and socio-demographic indicators and other documentary sources; second, the conduct of sixty in-depth interviews covering a range of key actors (politicians, municipal public employees, members of neighbourhood associations, and leaders of social innovative practices); finally, the direct observation of activities and social mobilisations fostered by citizens (community meetings, civil disobediences activities, etc.).

4. Urban segregation and socio-spatial differentiation in Catalonia during the crisis (and before)

The arrival of democracy in Catalonia (as in the rest of Spain) entailed significant improvements in the socio-spatial conditions of deprived urban areas, mainly as a result of neighbourhood renewal policies undertaken by the City Councils since the beginning of the 1980s. Local governments led the provision of public services, facilities and infrastructures that ameliorated the living conditions of the most deprived areas. For this purpose, local governments in Catalonia had to rely on their own resources and the additional support from different sectoral programmes of the regional and the central governments and the EU to cope with the problems of urban segregation (Blanco et al, 2011). The combination of such local policies with the general improvement of the living conditions in the country – thanks to economic growth and the building of the Welfare State – resulted in significant improvement in the standards of living in the most deprived areas and contributed to keep urban segregation relatively low (Nel-lo, 2010).

This situation started to change by the second half of the 1990s as a consequence of the combination of two main factors (Nel-lo, 2010: 689): the evolution of the real estate market prices, with a rapid increase since the 1996 until 2007; and demographic growth, largely due to strong immigration flows. As Nel-lo explains, “the combination

of these two factors (...) gave rise, on the one hand, to the re-emergence of substandard housing situations (especially as a result of overcrowding) and, on the other hand, to the concentration of social groups with lesser purchasing power in places where housing was relatively more affordable". As a result, processes of social segregation accelerated from the end of the 1990s, particularly as a result of "the concentration of incidences of greater social need in those very neighbourhoods experiencing the larger urban deficits: the old centres, 1960s and 1970s housing estates and areas resulting from processes of marginal urbanization" in the same years (ibid, p.689).

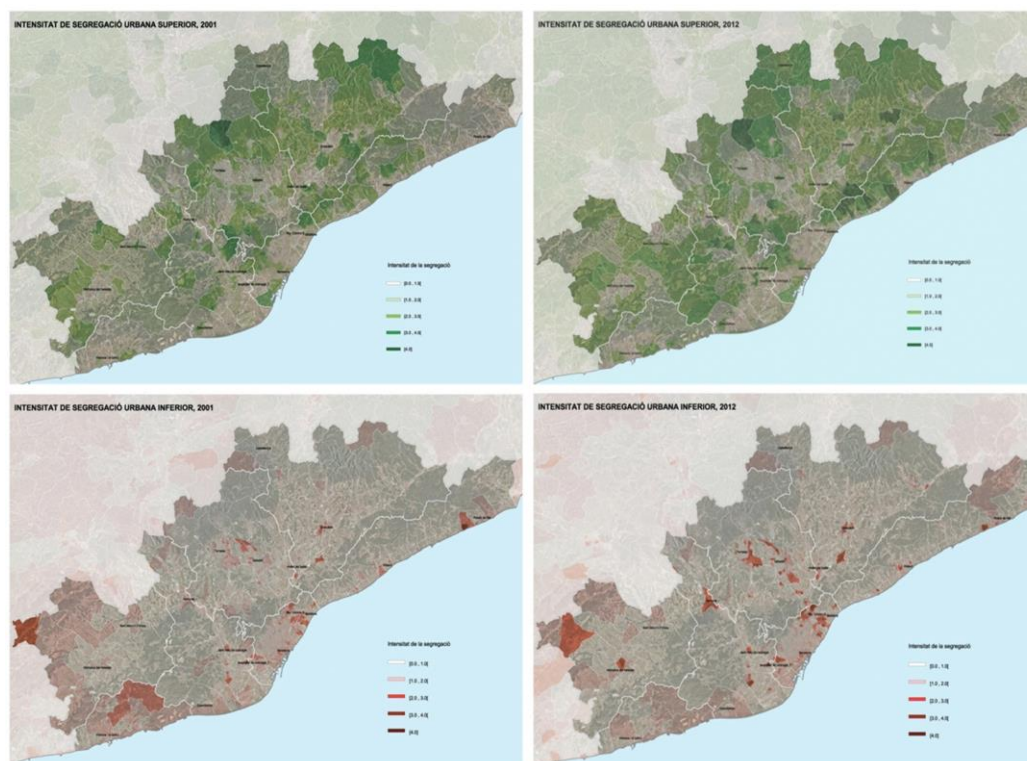
The analysis of the evolution of urban segregation indicators between 2001 and 2012 confirms such trends. The first observation that stems from our study is that despite starting with comparatively low levels of urban segregation, segregation has increased significantly in the period under study, pointing to a growing socio-spatial polarisation of Catalan cities⁷. Secondly, the maps of the evolution of urban segregation in this period show the notable continuities (and intensification) of segregation trends already observed in the beginning of the period. Notwithstanding the efforts to counteract such tendencies by the regional government of Catalonia between 2004 and 2011 by means of the 'Law on Neighbourhoods' (Llei de Barris), the most vulnerable areas in the beginning of the period are those that have seen their standards of living to the greatest extent (Figure 1).

Thirdly, our study shows that the segregation of the wealthier communities is even more intense than the segregation of the poor. That is to say, social mix occurs mainly between middle and low-income population, whereas upper-income social groups tend to concentrate in highly segregated and homogeneous urban areas, which in general occupy larger areas (with lower density) than the poorest communities (see also Figure 1). The observation of segregation maps allows us to state that most affluent and the poorest areas tend to respectively concentrate in different municipalities, indicating that socio-spatial inequalities do not only occur within municipalities but also between them. As explained by Nel-lo, this phenomenon – which indicates the metropolitan,

⁷ The index of spatial segregation of foreign population in Catalonia in 2001 was 1,8 in Catalonia in 2001, almost half the level of France in 2002 (3,3). By 2012, this index had reached 2,2 in Catalonia. In 2001, 42% of the census sections in Catalonia presented extremely low or high levels of foreign population (first and tenth percentile). In 2012, the corresponding figure had reached 60%. 39% had a very low % of foreign population (first percentile), whilst 21% had a very high % (tenth percentile). Here we are using the index of spatial segregation proposed by Maurin (2004), which compares the real and the normal distributions of certain social groups across space.

supramunicipal character of urban segregation – entails a redistribution problem, as “municipalities with the biggest urban deficits and the greatest needs in terms of social services tend to have a more limited fiscal base, while areas where these needs are lower have more resources as a result of their capacity to levy fiscal charges” (2010: 688).

Figure 1. Evolution of upper-income and lower-income segregation in the metropolitan region of Barcelona⁸

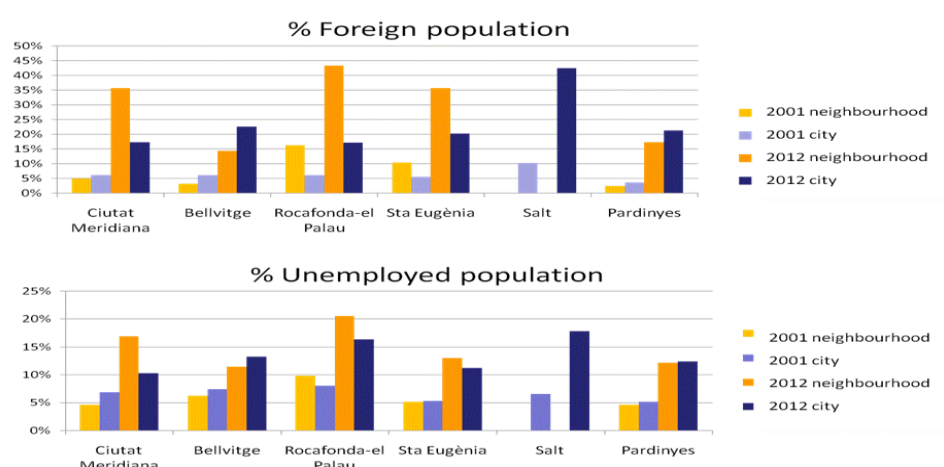


Source: prepared by the authors on the basis of the 2001 and 2011 Population and Housing Census and the Property Register.

⁸ Green areas indicate upper-income segregation areas and red areas indicate lower-income segregation areas. Maps of the left correspond to 2001. Maps of the right correspond to 2011. For the sake of clarity, we only present the map of the region of Barcelona (the analysis of segregation trends in the rest of Catalan regions can be found in <http://barrisicrisi.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/volum-1-resultatspreliminars.pdf>)

The available statistical data does not allow us to isolate the effects of the crisis on urban segregation dynamics, as the data sources encompass a broader period (2001-2012). However, in order to better understand such dynamics, we can complement the statistical and cartographical information with the analysis of our case studies.

Figure 2. % of foreign population and % of unemployment in the six case studies⁹



Source: prepared by the authors on the basis of the 2001 and 2011 Population and Housing Census.

The demographic evolution of neighbourhoods like Ciutat Meridiana (Barcelona), El Palau-Rocafonda (Mataró) and Santa Eugènia (Girona), as well as the municipality of Salt exemplifies the growing concentration of the migrant population in the housing estates at the outskirts of the cities (Figure 2). During the years of the housing bubble, the relatively better-off households of poor neighbourhoods saw the opportunity to sell their dwellings and to move out to wealthier areas. The voids left behind by the better-off families were occupied by lower-income families (mainly immigrants) that, despite their low salaries, took advantage of the increased accessibility of bank credits

⁹ Unemployment rates are calculated as % of registered unemployed population over total population at working age (16-65 years). Real unemployment rates are higher, since they are normally calculated amongst the “active population” (people working + people looking for a job).

to purchase a dwelling¹⁰. This process of population replacement meant that in areas like Ciutat Meridiana, for example, the percentage of foreign population grew from 5% to 40% in only 5 years (2001-2006) (see Palomera, 2013; and Blanco and León, 2016). Similar processes of population replacement took place in El Palau-Rocafonda, Santa Eugènia and Salt, although the arrival of immigration in these areas had started some years before (in the mid-90s). The crisis particularly hit those households belonging to the social strata that had concentrated in the poorest areas. All in all, the residential transformations provoked by the housing bubble paved the way for a growing socio-spatial polarisation in Catalonia. Such polarisation has been aggravated in recent years as a consequence of the uneven distribution of the social costs of the crisis.

5. Social innovation against socio-spatial segregation?

What type of social innovation dynamics develop under these circumstances? What can we observe about the presence of socially innovative initiatives in the urban areas most strongly hit by the crisis? What is the importance of practices of self-management in poor neighbourhoods?

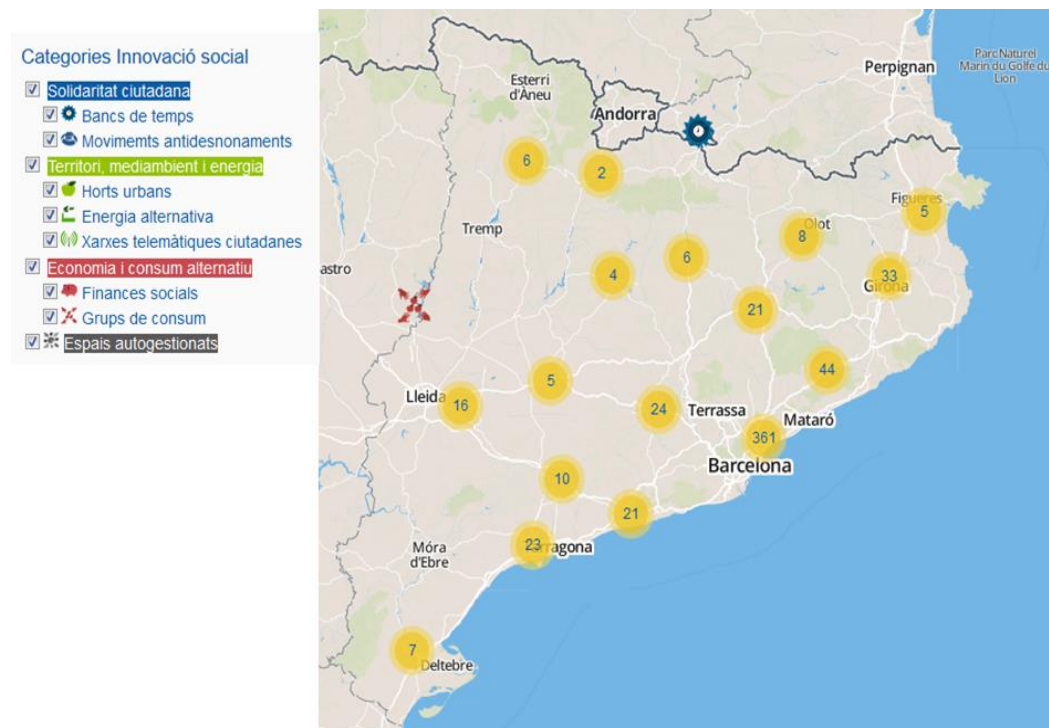
The Map of Social Innovation in Catalonia (Figure 3) focuses its attention on a set of practices that, in theory, can play a very important role from the point of view of the resilience of disadvantaged communities.

Practices such as community gardens and time banks can provide poor communities with goods and services ameliorating basic needs and compensating for the exclusionary dynamics of markets and the insufficiencies of public policies. Citizens' engagement in social movements like the PAH or in the community management of abandoned urban slots can foster the development of a civic awareness and the learning of civic skills that facilitate collective action – i.e. speaking in public, arranging public events, coordinating with others. Through practices like sustainable energy cooperatives, citizen telecommunications networks and the local assemblies of the anti-eviction movement communities can defy the power of big companies and their dominant position in policy fields like energy, telecommunications and housing. Beyond satisfying more or less immediate social needs, these kind of cooperative

¹⁰ For a study on the behavior of chain of voids in the housing market of Barcelona metropolitan area see Donat (2014).

practices represent an opportunity for debating, putting forward and experiencing with alternative forms of social production and reproduction.

Figure 3. Map of Social Innovation in Catalonia¹¹



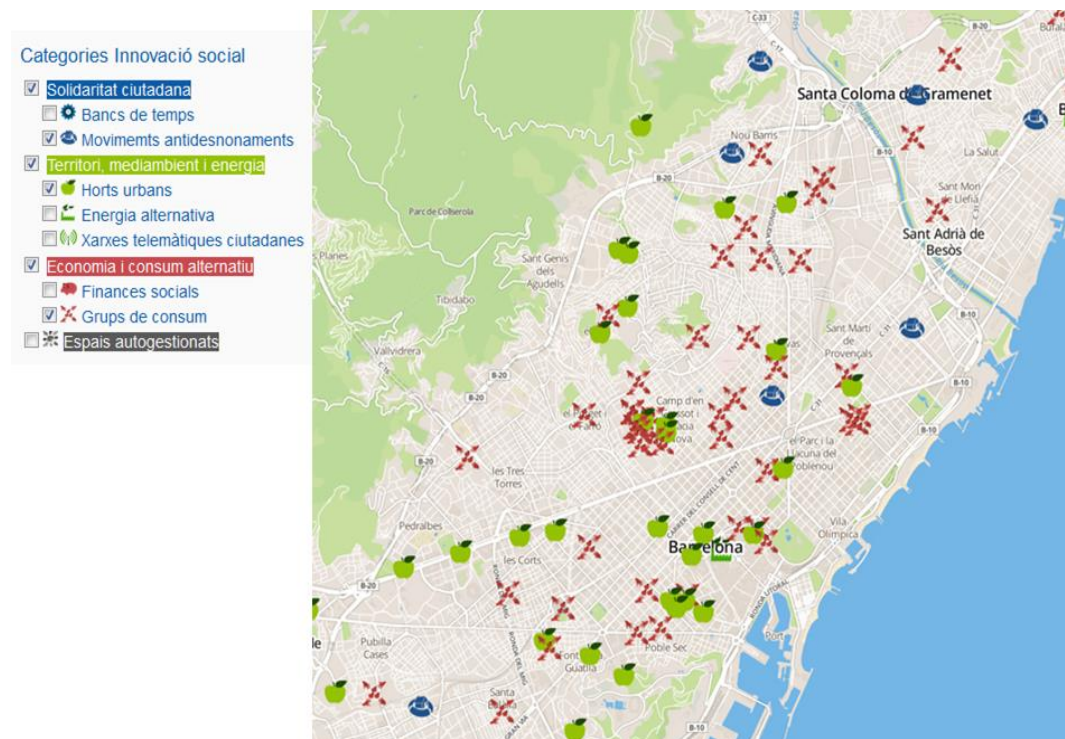
Source: prepared by the authors on the basis of website search.

However, the presence and the incidence of this type of practice in the most disadvantaged urban areas cannot be taken for granted. Putting our initial focus on the city of Barcelona, we can observe that most practices of social innovation mapped in our cartography do not concentrate neither in the wealthiest nor in the poorest areas, but in middle-income areas with significant levels of social mix and with a strong tradition of social mobilisation. The clearest example of this trend is the district of

¹¹ For a more detailed vision see: <http://barrisicrisi.wordpress.com/category/mapa-innovacio-social/>

Gràcia (Figure 4), which is far from being a “disadvantaged area”, although it is not amongst the richest areas of the city either.

Figure 4. Social innovation practices in the city of Barcelona: community gardens, social finance projects and local assemblies of the anti-eviction movement



Source: Map of Social Innovation of Catalonia

As it happens with other areas in Barcelona like Poblenou, Sant Andreu and Sants, Gràcia is a district characterised by the mixture of old and new generations, with a high cultural vitality, and with a very dense network of social and community organisations. In the same area, we can find a great variety of cultural organisations (choruses, leisure entities, sport entities, popular culture associations, etc.), neighbourhood associations, community media, squattered buildings, and local assemblies of broader social movements such as the no-global movement and the 15M (also known as the “Indignados” movement).

The superimposition of the maps of social innovation and of urban segregation allows us to make a more systematic analysis of the patterns of spatial distribution of

social innovation and its correlation with processes of socio-spatial differentiation (Figure 5). The results are very revealing: 87% of social innovation practices locate in areas where segregation values are not extreme. This occurs consistently for all types of socially innovative initiatives and in all the areas covered by our study (Table 1). In other words, this data suggests that social innovation is more likely to emerge in low-segregation areas – middle-income areas and zones with a relatively high level of social mix – whereas it tends to be very scarce or non-existent in upper-income areas or amongst the poorest communities. The data indicates that, far from being a strategy of the ‘socially excluded and impoverished individuals and social groups’ (Oosterlynck et al, 2013), a significant part of social innovation practices in Catalonia tend to be initiated by middle-income social groups that, apparently, aim at experimenting with alternative ways of consumption, social interaction and community participation.

We could speculate that social initiatives like social finances, cooperative consumer groups, sustainable energy cooperatives, etc. are better adapted to middle-income and progressive social groups because of two main reasons: first, engagement in these practices requires a significant level of political sophistication, which is more common amongst people with a middle or high socio-educational status; second, the involvement in this type of practice often entails some economic extra-costs – organic food consumed in consumer cooperatives, for example, tends to be more expensive than in conventional supermarkets, and more easily afforded by highly committed and relatively well-off people.

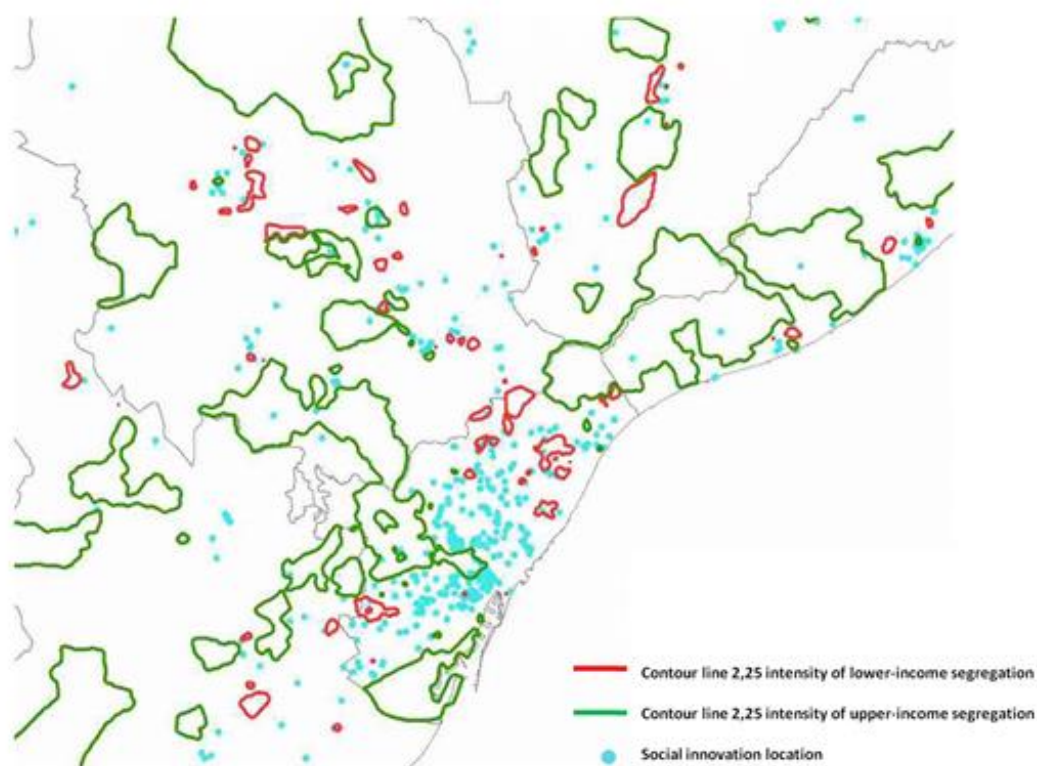
It must be stressed that the Map of Social Innovation does not cover the huge variety of innovative responses to the crisis initiated by the citizens in recent years. Mapping all these practices across the whole country would have been extremely difficult both for conceptual and for operational reasons. However, we can complement such information with our six case studies. These case studies reveal that the poorest communities do not remain passive in the face of the crisis.

Rather, such communities tend to give two main types of answers to the crisis:

- Practices of social mobilisation and resistance against public sector cuts and housing evictions. In almost all cases there have been recurrent mobilisations against cuts in public health, public education and social services. Two significant examples of such mobilisations are the demonstrations against the closure of a community health centre in El Palau-Rocafonda (2014) and in Ciutat Meridiana (2013). Local assemblies of the anti-eviction movement (as reflected also in the Map) have been very active in Ciutat Meridiana, El Palau-Rocafonda, Santa Eugènia and Salt.

- Second, solidarity and exchange networks which try to satisfy basic social needs such as food, clothes, school materials and childcare. A significant part of the population of these areas make use of food banks, get clothes in community clothing swaps, acquire study materials through community exchange networks and access to child care services thanks to solidarity networks and NGOs.

Figure 5. Segregation intensity versus social innovation location (Barcelona Metropolitan Region)



Source: Maps of Social Innovation and Urban Segregation.

We can observe some significant differences between these initiatives and those identified in the Map of Social Innovation. First, many of the social responses to the crisis in these areas – with the important exception of the local assemblies of the anti-eviction movement - have neither the transformative nor the disruptive potential that is often presumed in social innovation. Rather, they are charitable initiatives initiated

by external agents like NGOs – often with the support of public administrations. Even when the residents initiate them autonomously, these initiatives tend to focus on the alleviation of pressing social needs affecting the most vulnerable social groups without searching for their active involvement. Moreover, autonomist ideas and self-management practices tend to have little weight in the analysed disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and political contestation focuses on the vindication of greater public sector intervention. The extent to which many of the initiatives detected in these urban areas fit with the conceptual category of social innovation is arguable.

Table 1. Number of practices of social innovation in upper-income and lower-income segregation areas

Region	Upper-income segregation	Without segregation	Lower-income segregation	Total Segregation	Total Social Innovation	% Total Segregation	% Lower income segregation
Alt Pirineu and Aran Region		9	2	2	11	18,2%	18,2%
Barcelona Metropolitan Region	38	450	14	52	502	10,4%	2,8%
Comarques Centrals Region	8	42	5	13	55	23,6%	9,1%
Comarques Gironines Region	9	50	5	14	64	21,9%	7,8%
Ponent Region	4	21	1	5	26	19,2%	3,8%
Camp de Tarragona Region	5	37		5	42	11,9%	0,0%
Terres de l'Ebre Region		5	3	3	8	37,5%	37,5%
Total	64	614	30	94	708	13,3%	4,2%

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of the Maps of Social Innovation and Urban Segregation.

However, as Blanco and León (2016) have shown through the in depth-study of the case of Ciutat Meridiana, practices of solidarity and political unrest can overlap in some instances, generating a virtuous circle of political awareness and political empowerment. In this regard, housing evictions have become a crucial driver for social innovation in some popular urban areas, which reflects both the salience of this issue in this type of area and the capacity of the anti-housing eviction movement (led at the national level by La PAH, the Platform of the Mortgage Victims) to politicise this topic and to connect with the popular sectors (Blanco and Leon, 2016; De Weerd and Garcia, 2015).

The comparison between the different trajectories of socio-spatial change in our case studies shows the importance of collective action. The most vulnerable areas are those that attracted the highest proportions of immigrant population since the end of the 1990s. Such areas – particularly Salt, Ciutat Meridiana and El Palau-Rocafonda – have in common low levels of community pride and identity. People in these areas often express the perception that they have been historically looked down on by public opinion and marginalised by public institutions. Such sentiments meant that, during the years of the housing bubble, a large part of the population decided to make the most of the circumstances of real estate market, and move out from their neighbourhoods. This process intensified as a consequence of the massive arrival of immigrants, which fuelled the perception that those areas were experiencing a ghettoization process. The process of population replacement significantly weakened collective action in these areas (Blanco and León, 2016) and objective conditions of vulnerability worsened dramatically, as observed later in the years of the crisis.

The cases of Bellvitge and Pardinyes stand in stark contrast with Ciutat Meridiana, Palau-Rocafonda and Salt. Despite starting from a very similar position, these areas followed opposite trends during the same years. In Bellvitge, strong community pride and vigorous local identity favoured that the traditional residents stayed in the neighbourhood during the years of the housing boom. Pardinyes not only managed to keep its traditional population but also attracted new young middle-class families to new dwellings built since the end of the 1990s. Both neighbourhoods have historically benefited from important public investments in public space, public facilities and public services, which have entailed significant improvements in the quality of the urban environment. High levels of community pride are also linked to the perception that such urban improvements are the result of intense community participation and of close collaboration between community organisations and local public administrations.

Cross-case comparison confirms the importance of collective action in disadvantaged urban areas. However, the importance of collective action significantly increases over a longer time-frame; it is embedded in collaborative arrangements with public administrations; and makes clear impacts in terms of improvement of the living conditions in these areas.

6. Concluding remarks

Some of the results of the study presented in this paper challenge the most optimistic accounts of the ‘grassroots approach’ of social innovation – those emphasising the value of social innovation as a strategy to compensate for market and

state failure in the context of spaces of socio-spatial deprivation. Such optimistic insights are particularly important in mainstream discourses that assume the unavoidability of state retrenchment and see social innovation – innovative self-help initiatives – as the solution for those areas and communities most strongly hit by the crisis. In contrast to this type of approach, our analysis highlights the structural character of socio-spatial segregation and the insufficiency of sub-local initiatives. Intensification of residential segregation of the most vulnerable social groups in Catalonia over the last decade is related to the complex combination of a set of factors including: massive immigration over a short period of time; strong institutional stimulus for home purchase during the years of the housing bubble; a bias towards the construction of middle and upper-status housing and lack of social housing; the speculative nature of economic growth during the years of the housing bubble and the sharp drop in employment since the bubble burst in 2008; and the disproportionate effects of public sector cuts amongst the most needed social groups and urban areas (Méndez et al, 2015). Moreover, our study reveals that processes of socio-spatial differentiation occur not only within municipalities, but also at an inter-municipal scale. All these observations point to the need for public policies formulated at different levels (national, regional, metropolitan, municipal) that counteract the residential segregation of the poor and that have strong redistributive effects between municipalities and urban areas. Our study also reveals that social innovation does not necessarily emerge in the most deprived communities, but in the areas that concentrate more resources for collective action. Putting the emphasis on citizen horizontal and cooperative practices as a response to ‘state and market failure’ may reinforce the redistributive problem that lies behind processes of socio-spatial differentiation, generating a burden that is more difficult to cope with for the most disadvantaged communities. Public support is therefore fundamental in those communities where social capital or self-organising capacities are weaker.

When looking at the different trajectories of disadvantaged urban areas and the factors accounting for their uneven capacity to resist and to adapt to the effects of the crisis, we observe the importance of collaborative relationships between governmental and non-governmental actors to provide joint solutions to the challenges of communities. As recognised by Oosterlynck et al (2013: 24-26), the mainstream literature on social innovation sees socially innovative practices as a reaction to state failure and considers the relationship between social innovation and public institutions as very difficult and problematic. Others, to the contrary, highlight the possibility of generating positive synergies among public institutions, private organisations and civil society (Martinelli, 2013; Swyngedouw and Moulaert, 2010). Our paper supports this

second perspective, as it illustrates how the most resilient communities have been those with a historical trajectory of strong collaborative relations between public administrations and community organisations. Such collaborative relations, which do not exclude conflict, have resulted in significant developments in the quality of the environment and of public services and, in turn, have strengthened community identity and community pride.

Our study does not deny either the increasing difficulty of determining state action to tackle the challenge of social cohesion in cities, or the need for socially innovative practices that complement (and challenge) public policies. As stated by Swyngedouw (2009) the characterization of socially innovative models of governance as non-hierarchical, networked and (selectively) inclusive forms of governmentality cannot be sustained uncritically. Processes like the “prominence of new social actors, the consolidation of the presence of others, the exclusion or diminished power position of groups that were present in earlier forms of government and the continuing exclusion of other social actors who have never been included” (Swyngedouw, 2009:74) and an incremental presence of the market as the “natural” space of social interaction are especially problematic. Both processes are intimately related to the urban and social aspects that we have been examining in this paper. We have tried to provide a set of arguments warning against the risk of transferring the responsibility for guaranteeing urban social cohesion to citizen based social innovation. In contemporary processes of change, it is necessary to consider new forms of public action that can respond effectively to new social challenges. In these new forms of public institution, social innovation can be a source of inspiration, but not the solution to the most persistent structural problems.

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